

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: ETRD, ELAB, HO

SUBJECT: US FRUIT COMPANY UNIONS FORM UNITED FRONT

REF: TEGUCIGALPA A-21

1. IN MARCH 7 CONVERSATION NAPOLEON ACEVEDO, PRESIDENT OF SUTRAFSO (STANDARD FRUIT UNION), AND OBDULIO CACERES, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SITRATERCO (UNITED BRANDS UNION), TOLD LABOFF THAT THE TWO UNIONS HAVE FORMED A UNITED FRONT TO DEAL WITH THE GOH ON LABOR PROBLEMS AND BANANA POLICY. THE LABOR LEADERS CALLED AT THE EMBASSY FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH LABMIN FONSECA DURING WHICH THEY URGED STRONG MINISTRY ACTION AGAINST THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPANIES.

2. STANDARD FRUIT, ACCORDING TO ACEVEDO, HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED THAT THERE WILL BE NO AGREEMENT WITH THE GOH ON THE MIXED ENTERPRISE (EMPRESA MIXTA) PROPOSAL FOR THE ISLETAS AREA FARMS. ACEVEDO SAID THAT DURING THE WEEK OF MARCH 3 THE COMPANY BEGAN AROUND-THE-CLOCK WORK TO DISMANTLE THE AREA'S WATER AND ELECTRICAL GENERATOR PLANTS WITHOUT NOTICE TO THE UNION. UNION INQUIRIES WERE ANSWERED BY COMPANY CONFIRMATION AND THE INFORMATION THAT ALL THE ISLETAS

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WORKERS WOULD BE DISMISSED WITH THE LEGALLY REQUIRED

SEVERANCE PAY. ACEVEDO ADDED THAT UNION REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION FROM THE GOH BANANA COMMISSION ON THE FINDINGS BY THE TEAM WHICH REVIEWED COMPANY BOOKS IN SAN FRANCISCO WERE REFUSED. ALSO, ACEVEDO CLAIMS THAT ALTHOUGH THE LABOR MINISTRY DECISION OF FEBRUARY 27 REQUIRED STANDARD TO REEMPLOY ALL WORKERS AND PAY BACK WAGES TO SOME (SEE REF), THE COMPANY HAS DONE NEITHER.

3. CACERES REITERATED SITRATERCO'S VIEW THAT UNITED IS NOW IN A POSITION TO FULLY REEMPLOY ITS WORKFORCE WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ABOUT 40 WORKERS. HE SAID THAT THE UNION IS REQUESTING THAT THE COMPANY DISMISS THOSE 40 WORKERS WITH SEVERANCE PAY AND REEMPLOY ALL OTHERS ON A NORMAL SCHEDULE. THIS POSITION WAS PRESENTED TO LABMIN FONSECA ON MARCH 7 WITH AN ULTIMATUM. IF FONSECA DOES NOT OFFICIALLY REFUSE THE COMPANY'S REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE WORK SUSPENSION BY MARCH 17 THE UNION WILL BEGIN A PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MINISTER. CACERES SAYS THAT SINCE THE WORKERS REMAIN SUSPENDED PENDING A MINISTRY DECISION, FONSECA'S INACTION IS ACTUALLY AN APPROVAL OF THE COMPANY REQUEST.

4. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO CACERES AND ACEVEDO THIS IS THE FIRST OCCASION FOR JOINT ACTION BETWEEN THE UNIONS. THIS COOPERATION BETWEEN SITRATERCO, THE BACKBONE OF THE FESITRANH FEDERATION, AND THE WAYWARD SUTRAFSCO, COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FEDERATION AND ACEVEDOS'S UNION.
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